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The Printer's Grey

Alchemy, Ritual and Performance in
Fine Art Printmaking

Darren van der Merwe

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Alchemy, Ritual and Performance in Fine Art Printmaking

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree.
It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in this dissertation from the
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Signature:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a stylized capital 'D' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

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Fig 1. Irving Penn, *Sandblaster*, New York (1951). Gelatin silver print mounted on board

Introduction

How many people today live in a language that is not their own? Or no longer, or not yet, even know their own and know poorly the major language that they are forced to serve? This is ... the problem of minorities ... but also a problem for all of us: how to tear a minor literature away from its own language, allowing it to challenge the language and making it follow a sober revolutionary path? How to become a nomad and an immigrant and a gypsy in relation to one's own language? Kafka answers: steal the baby from its crib, walk the tightrope. (Deleuze & Guatarri 1986:19)

Peter Zhang, in writing on the work of Deleuze and Guatarri, identifies what he calls Deleuzian minor rhetoric¹: namely the need to step outside of the major language and occupy the position of minority. This position of minority, which for Deleuze is a position of power, is achieved through the process of *becoming*, a constant state of mobility. In a sense this is one of the motivations for my project – understanding the language of printmaking I find myself invested in by considering the material qualities of printmaking as well as the process or act of printing through a number of visual forms. In order better to understand my own position within printmaking, I have used this project to explore the figure or persona of the printmaker and in doing so I am journeying towards the Deleuzian position of minority by questioning ways of thinking about print and the printmaker.

This project is located within the fine arts practice of printmaking, but positions itself as an investigation of the liminal, in-between processes of printmaking in terms of alchemy and ritual through the figure of the printmaker. The project is everything in-between the initial idea for a print and the final product, a space I have come to refer to as *The Printer's Grey*. This reflects my own art-making methodology and my particular approach and thinking within printmaking, where my notebooks and proofs hold the same importance as the eventual printed product. These objects all reveal a creative process, which is flexible and shifting rather than one that merely renders an image in printed form. In drawing attention to the in-between processes during the act of making I assert both its instrumental role in the creation of the print as well as the importance of the process as a site of thinking through the visual. Specifically in relation to printmaking, *The Printer's Grey* speaks to and seeks to draw into the gallery space aspects of the in-studio process of making a print – aspects which often remain hidden when viewing a print.

This document is divided into 4 chapters. The first chapter introduces the idea of *The Printer's Grey* as the catalyst and framework for the project, and includes a discussion of Nicolas Bourriaud's notion of the *radicant* and Deleuze and Guattari's *rhizome* as frameworks for liminality. In the second chapter the journeyman as the *grey* agent in printmaking is discussed as a multifaceted persona in terms of an alchemist, priest and flâneur. The third chapter highlights some states of inbetweenness relating to the liminal spaces within printmaking, such as the role of skill, technique, labour and visual cognition in the process of making. The final chapter is a written walkabout and documentation of the exhibition, in which I discuss the processes behind the artworks in order to give visual form to some of the more abstract ideas in this document. This text is therefore one part of a greater dialogue between theory and practice, the process of creating the artworks, the artworks themselves, their display within a gallery and their reception by the viewer.

¹ A version of Peter Zhang's paper on Gilles Deleuze and Minor Rhetoric was presented at the Rhetoric Society of America 14th Biennial Conference in 2010 and later was published in *ETC*. Zhang, P. 2011. Gilles Deleuze and Minor Rhetoric. *ETC*. April: 214 -229

The Printer's Grey explained

16. The information in many prints is encoded in binary systems of 'on' and 'off' of black and white. Gray does not exist. (Field 1994:171)

In *Sentences on Printed Art*, Richard S. Field compiled a series of short statements about printed art in order to explore some of the "opposites" he believes "are encoded in printmaking" (Ibid). On the level of technique, of the material and process interactions involved in producing a print, printmaking does rely on a system of binaries. For example, when printing in black ink, grey (in terms of a tonal scale) does not exist. Information, be it a line or flat areas of tone, is encoded in binary form – grease/ no grease, etched/ unetched, open mesh/ blocked mesh. The image information is always split between these two states. Even when dealing with multiple colour printing, the image information is still split between multiple matrices, each coded in 'on' and 'off'. Grey is therefore the play of optics in print used for the illusion of the in-between, the illusion of grades between black and white. In the same vein, the printed image occupies two states: the inked up (charged) matrix and the impression on paper. Both of these states constitute the image, even though the matrix is discarded after the impression (print) is pulled. The image is therefore suspended between these two states – matrix and impression up until the point a print is pulled. The examples of the way in which printmaking relies on binary systems are many, and these have been well established in numerous printmaking manuals, yet the implication of the binary system within the process is what is of importance in this project.

The notion of *The Printer's Grey* stems from both the dependence on the binary and Field's statement that "grey does not exist" (Ibid.). The central question that arises from these two ideas is: what of the space between the binaries? Semiotics has established that the two poles of a binary rely on each other for their own definition and distinction – 'self' cannot be defined without 'other', 'light' without 'dark', 'right' without 'wrong'. It is this relationship between poles, a threshold, which creates an in-between, liminal² space. *The Printer's Grey* is therefore a poetic means of speaking of this in-between, liminal space, which exists but does not necessarily have the permanence of black or white. While the formation of the idea of *The Printer's Grey* began with a reflection on the physical binaries of printmaking processes, the presence of liminal spaces can be applied to philosophical concerns about what it means to be a printmaker and to operate within the discipline. Field echoes this in another of his statements:

20. The imperceptible space of the prints – evoked by the deformation of the paper by plates, blocks, and stones – is an important part of their content and operates as an analogue for mental space. (Field 1994:171)

This imperceptible space of the prints seems to gesture towards the relationship or space between the matrix and the paper as a liminal, thinking space. Mieke Bal, in the seminar paper *Video, Migration, and Hetero-temporality: The Liminality of Time*, introduces her use of the term *liminality* as follows:

I take the concept of liminality literally, as the event occurring on the *limen*, or threshold. [...] In my inflection of the concept, the limen is the boundary between inside and outside, not as a border, not a line, but a space where insiderness and outsiderness can be *negotiated*, transformed, and swapped. It is the threshold where encounter is about to take place. (Bal 2011:14)

Drawing together Field's hint of the mental space of prints and Bal's "inflection" of liminality, I would define liminality as a thinking space where a spectrum of ideas can be wrestled with, negotiated, reflected on and transformed through the forming of new connections. The physical space of the print studios, the space of active labour, is therefore also a thinking, processing space where the act of doing is also the act of becoming.

In Nicholas Bourriaud's *The Radicant*, he writes on the *altermodern* and defines it as a "construction plan that would allow new intercultural connections, the construction of a space of negotiation going beyond postmodern multiculturalism" (Bourriaud 2009:40). Although in *The Radicant* Bourriaud is trying to conceive of a modernism for the 21st century the metaphor he uses to define his space of negotiation is analogous to the way in which I think about liminality in my own project. Bourriaud makes use of radical and radicant root systems as a metaphor for the way in which connections can be formed between ideas or any form of cultural production, and highlights the difference between the two root systems in the following:

[The altermodern] resembles those plants that do not depend on a single root for their growth but advance in all directions on whatever surfaces present themselves by attaching multiple hooks to them as ivy does. Ivy belongs to the botanical family of the *radicants*, which develop their roots as they advance, unlike the *radicals*, whose development is determined by their being anchored in a particular soil. [...] The radicant] translates itself into the terms of the space in which it moves. [...] It defines the subject as an object of negotiation. (Bourriaud 2009:51)

Bourriaud writes in favour of the radicant root system as a networking structure that allows for dynamic change, fluidity and development based on location (soil) rather than a fixed structure (such as the radical). This metaphor is useful as a system of ordering within a liminal space, since it allows connections

to be formed between an array of ideas without having to become fixed in one position. Deleuze and Guattari also make use of root metaphors in discussing their framework of the rhizome in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. They begin with the single tap root, which adheres to the “law of reflection, the One becomes two” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:5). From the dichotomous *root* they move to the radicle³-system or fascicular root – a root system without a tip, from which “an immediate, indefinite multiplicity of secondary roots grafts onto it and undergoes a flourishing development” (Ibid.). However, the rhizome, a subterranean system different from both the root and radicle, can “assume very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers” (Ibid:7). One of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be” (Ibid.). From Bourriaud’s description of the radican and Deleuze and Guattari’s use of the rhizomatic structure, it is possible to construct a system of connection, which allows for a network of ideas, methodologies, techniques and ways of thinking which may be disparate at first, but which meet up at various points to create new relationships and ways of thinking. The rhizome “has no beginning or an end” (Tully 2011:66), a fact which allows for an exploration without a definite end point in sight, but rather suggests a journey through a set of ideas that have concretized at certain points in the form of art objects and of this document, which in turn adds to and propels the journey onward.

The rhizomatic form is important not merely as a flexible and mobile system of ordering, but it is also important as the framework for Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of *becoming*, which they define as the following:

Becoming is a rhizome, not a classificatory or genealogical tree. Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing-progressing; neither is it corresponding, establishing corresponding relations; neither is it producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiation. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, ‘appearing,’ ‘being,’ ‘equaling,’ or ‘producing’. (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:239).

Central to this project is the figure of the printmaker, and it is through the process of becoming, through the forming of alliances with and drawing a “line ‘between’ the terms in play and beneath assignable relations” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:239), that the figure of the printmaker can be negotiated. Becoming is therefore an active and ongoing process of forming connections between terms and assuming these terms or identities partially or wholly into the conception of self. The process of becoming, which occurs in a space of liminality, is never complete. Instead, “[b]ecoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are.

What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:238). Becoming is therefore the journey towards a position of minority, which forms connections between terms as it passes through, as expressed in the rhizome and radical. The liminal body, therefore, is “caught in a curious almost-becoming, a state of absence which is held in place, sometimes quite literally, as with the mythological centaur – a being which is both horse and man but simultaneously neither. The rights of a body to certain observances and status is held in limbo by the absence” (Sey 2011:8). The state of absence keeps the liminal body within the active space of liminality, and in the process of becoming forces the constant negotiation and redefinition of the body. By forming connections with a number of different philosophical figures a *conceptual persona* of the printmaker will emerge akin to Bourriaud’s semionaut: a mobile body, a journeying figure.

² The origin of the word *liminal* is from the Latin *limen*, which means ‘threshold’. (*Oxford English Dictionary*. 2012. Sv ‘liminal’).

³ *Radical* (as used by Bourriaud) and *radicle* (Deleuze and Guattari) share the same Latin etymology *radicula* and denote similar primary root systems. Deleuze and Guattari, however make the distinction between the singular *root* and *radicle* to illustrate the difference between a bifurcating advance through soil and multiple grafting of secondary roots from the primary root.

Towards a *grey* agent

In reflecting on the agents within printmaking, the binary of master and apprentice naturally comes to mind as two poles within the continuum of specialized skills training. However, neither the master printer nor the apprentice offers the fluidity and mobility of the rhizomatic (becoming) subject. It is therefore in the figure of the journeyman that I find the space to define and negotiate the *grey* agent. In order to discuss the journeyman as the *grey* agent or persona it is first necessary to reflect on the binary poles between which the journeyman is located, namely the master and the apprentice. The figures of the master, apprentice and journeyman, which reflect a medieval societal structure, hold the ideals of a particular approach to specialized craft⁴ skill training - a guild system. Braddon, in his text *The Guilds*, identifies the three social classes, or “grades” as he calls them and locates them within craft trades:

Three grades, the master, the journeyman, and the apprentice, all equal in each grade: all three grades proud of the skill of the particular craft, and all jealous to maintain its reputation (Braddon 1925:6)

The master achieved the status of a guild master by completing a masterpiece, the production of which “was a peer-reviewed demonstration of skill” (Epstein and Prak 2008:13), after a process of apprenticeship under the teaching of another master craftsman. This apprenticeship involved training in all aspects of the craft and lasted between 3 and 7 years. The recognition as a master therefore required a level of experience, skill and control within the craft as set out and judged by those who already held this title. The journeyman, however, cuts between the master and apprentice as an agent that has completed his apprenticeship but has not produced the masterpiece enabling him to gain the standing as master⁵. The journeyman traveled from city to city, without a fixed trade position within a guild, working as a hired hand under master craftsmen. The journeyman, with the skill level of a master, therefore becomes the roaming, nomadic agent gaining and sharing experience and skills from and with various masters without being granted the social standing of a guild master. In this way the journeyman occupies a liminal position between the binary poles of master and apprentice – a *grey* position.

Within this medieval guild system there is a working relationship between the master craftsman, the apprentice and the journeyman, all three of whom would work together within a specialized craft studio. At this point in European print

history, during the 1400s, relief printing from woodblocks was the primary means of production and reproduction of the printed image. Although the number of craftsmen within a specific field of specialization was controlled by the guilds (as a societal structure) within each town within the craft of printing there was a division of labour that extended beyond the relationship between master, apprentice and journeyman. Each stage of the printing process, from the designing of the image, to transferring of the image to the woodblock, to the cutting, printing and colouring (initially done by hand before the use of multiple block colour printing), to the publishing, was divided up between a number of different craftsmen. This manner of collaborative labour continued through the development of movable type, engraving and etching.

The development of the printing techniques that followed relief printing also occurred because of crossovers between other craft disciplines. Wyckoff, in her essay *Matrix, Mark, Syntax: A Historical View of Printmaking in Relation to Its Techniques*, notes that the first generation of metal engravers worked in the gold- and silversmith industry, and more than likely used the prints of their engraved designs as marketing tools (2000:19). She similarly notes that the development of etching “involved the acid baths used by ironworkers to decorate armor and other objects” (Wyckoff 2000:15). By the 1800s the guild system had ceased to exist as a societal structure through a gradual decline due to industrialization, and was replaced by industries of professional printers. Throughout the development of European printmaking from relief printing through to lithography (circa 1790s) and photographic printing (mid 1800s), artists have made use of printmaking both as a reproductive and a creative medium in and of itself. Artists such as Dürer, Rembrandt, Goya, Blake, Degas and Munch produced large bodies of work in print, working either in collaboration with professional printers or, in certain cases, producing the matrix themselves, particularly in the case of etching and lithography which required far less training than the laborious task of engraving. The work of these artists marked the shift of the use of printmaking as means to reproduce existing artworks to the use to printmaking as an end in itself to produce original artworks. This shift is important because artists began to see and use the techniques of printmaking for their material qualities, resulting in prints that not only spoke to the conceptual (content) concerns of the artists, but also to the medium of printmaking itself.

By the late 1950s and early 1960s print workshops began to open in America, beginning with Tatyana Grosman’s Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE) and June Wayne’s Tamarind Lithography Workshop. This was later followed by other print workshops, such as Gemini Ltd (1966) and Tyler Graphics Ltd (1974) both established by master printer Kenneth Tyler (Friedman 1987:7). The development of these workshops marks an important shift in the history of

printmaking, in terms of collaborations between artists and printmakers and also in dissolving the boundaries between printing processes and the expansion of the idea of what constitutes a print. The print workshops, which according to Platzker were based on the models of European print studios (2000:27), operated in a similar vein to the guild system in terms of the presence of the master printer and the apprentices (printmakers in training), and in the division of labour. The divisions in the workshops, however, were far less rigid, with the printmakers and technicians using a larger range of techniques. The journeyman no longer features in the functioning of the print workshop, and is replaced by the technician – the trained craftsman without the title of ‘master’. Artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein, Jasper Johns and Claes Oldenburg, in collaboration with master printmakers, began expanding the boundaries of printmaking by combining printing techniques, pushing the scale of prints, printing on unconventional materials, taking prints from the two-dimensional form into three dimension and bringing their approaches in painting to the printed form. These collaborations not only allowed artists without formal training in printmaking to produce prints but also furthered the development of print in terms of experimentation. Fernand Mourlot said of Picasso as a printmaker that “[he] listened carefully, then did the opposite of what he had been taught, and it worked. [...] The way in which he worked the lithographic stone was not merely contrary to custom, but contrary to the most basic rules of the craft” (Mourlot cited in Wyckoff 2000:13). The print workshops therefore provided the space for new forms of experimentation and collaboration within printmaking, which both increased the body of technical knowledge in print and also shifted the way in which prints were viewed as an independent art form.



Fig 2. John Cage, *Empty Fire* (trial proof for *Dramatic Fire*) (1989). Aquatint on smoked paper



Fig 3. Robert Motherwell, *The stoneness of the stone* (1974). Lithograph on two-tone paper.

Although the journeyman as a historical figure is located within a medieval societal order, my own training in and understanding of contemporary printmaking is informed by the innovations of the twentieth century. The definitions and boundaries of what constituted a print were questioned and extended, particularly in the mid-twentieth century, by artists such as Rauschenberg and Johns. As such, in my initiation into printmaking, the idea of the hybrid print (combining various printing techniques), printing on surfaces other than paper and prints breaking a two-dimensional format (as well as many others) were not new ideas. I am embodying the journeyman as a metaphor or philosophical container for a way of thinking about operating within the process of printmaking and my position as a printmaker, in light of the historical development of the medium. The journeyman as the *grey* agent is simultaneously part of the tradition of print as well as on a journey of finding a new path and working method within the contemporary workings of printmaking.

Drawing on Walter Benjamin's discussion of the screen actor in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Bourriaud conceives of the *semionaut*, his conceptual persona, in terms of a "transportable image, a moving mirror: in the world of unlimited reproduction, the destiny of the subject is that of permanent exile" (Bourriaud 2009:42). The semionaut is therefore someone who is constantly forming new roots (returning to the radican metaphor), which, for Bourriaud, "constitutes a laboratory of identities" (2009:51). The most crucial aspects of the *altermodern* and the semionaut are that of movement, temporary location and the generation of journeys within which the subject constantly constitutes him- or herself. In defining the journeyman as the *grey* agent, therefore, the metaphors of the moving mirror and laboratory of identities are well suited. The underlying desire is to see the reflection of the printmaker in order to understand the role being assumed, yet the mirror, as with the becoming of the printmaker persona, is not fixed. The reflection is therefore always fleeting, shifting and catching different glimpses. This opens up the possibility of discussing the journeyman in terms of a number of different personas (a series of alliances), which together, and within the laboratory of identities, can begin to form an image of who the journeyman could be as printmaker. Through my interactions with printmaking processes and materials I have identified three performative personas that I enact through printmaking, namely the alchemist, the priest and the flâneur.

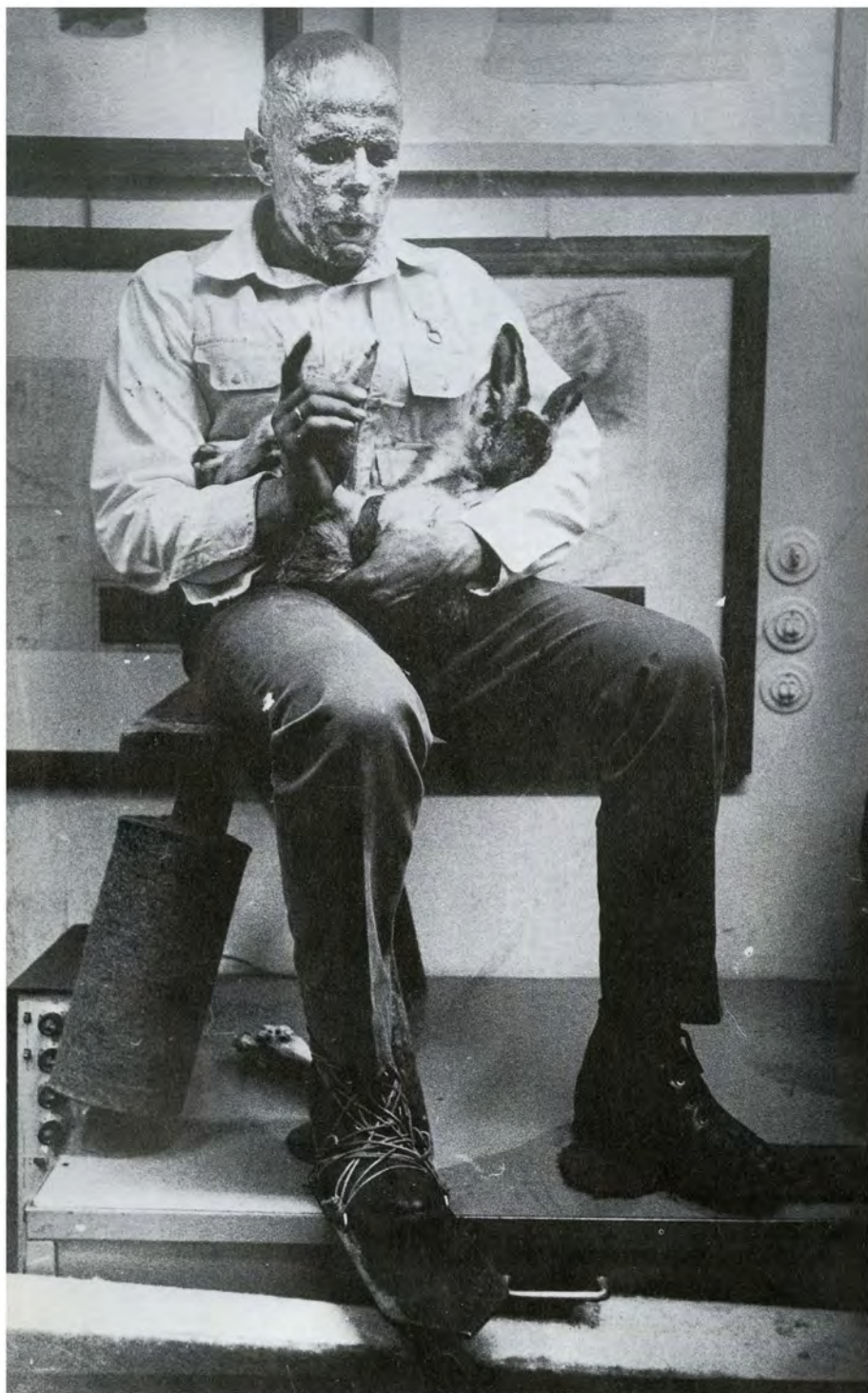


Fig 4. Joseph Beuys, *How to explain pictures to a dead hare* (1965). Action.

The artist as alchemist, priest and flâneur:

Performance personas in the work of Joseph Beuys and Willem Boshoff

‘Everyone an artist’ is the clearest formulation of Joseph Beuys’ intention. It means a widened concept of art in which the whole process of living itself is the creative act. [...] As a sculptor, Beuys’ attempt has been to extend this sense of something more beyond the accepted field of art and into life, so that thinking, talking, performing, teaching – and above all living, which all of us do – can be seen as a process of moulding or sculpting (Tisdall 1979:7)

Beuys’ recognition that living, thinking and interacting with the world is an important aspect of creative production positions him as a flâneur, who is aware of and takes in every aspect of the environment he finds himself in. In a similar way, I am trying to identify and draw on the various roles I assume within my creative workings and, like the flâneur, mindfully interact with the space I am immersed in.

In the performance *How to explain pictures to a dead hare* Beuys spent three hours explaining his art to a dead hare (clutched in his arms) in a gallery closed off to the public. The performance was only visible from the doorway and street window of the gallery. With his head anointed with honey and gold leaf, Beuys performs an intimate yet futile unpacking of his own thinking processes – performing the role of both the anointed priest (a spokesperson of God) as well as the teacher. His revelations, however, are silenced due to the distance he places between himself and his audience. Just as one of his sculptures would be displayed silently in a gallery space, Beuys in this performance places himself as the artist, priest and teacher trying to break the silence.



Fig 5. Joseph Beuys, *How to explain pictures to a dead hare* (1965). Action.

In contrast to his live performance work are Beuys' shelves, one of which is *Barraque Dull Odde*, produced between 1961 and 1967. In this work Beuys displays a laboratory of objects and materials he collected and interacted with over a number of years. Tisdall notes that Beuys refers to the shelves as "action object[s]" because [they contain] several components of his own actions" (1979:80). The objects stand metonymically for the presence and exploration of the artist with the objects and materials representing his thoughts and ideas. In this instance Beuys is performing both the artist and the scientist with his display being an "effort to bridge the gulf between creativity and scientific analysis" (Ibid.). The objects are not performed or used live, but rather are imbued with the actions Beuys has carried out on them. In a similar manner, my presence as journeyman is implied by or imbued in the objects, materials and drawings on display rather than being performed live. In doing so I am trying to bridge the silence between the printmaker labouring in the studio and the art object on display in the gallery.

In his work *Big Druid in His Cubicle*, South Africa artist Willem Boshoff also bridges this gap between the artist as scholar or researcher, the artist in studio and the art object on display⁶. Here Boshoff performs his life experiences through his persona as a druid in a six-day living installation in which "he does battle with shadows, aesthetic constructs and words" (Boshoff 2012:Online). Within his cubicle Boshoff "works on computer, writ[es] druidic dictionaries, plot[s] philosophical strategies and document[s] his experiences and large collection of diviners' articles" (Ibid.). Boshoff both identifies himself as a druid as well as uses the persona to mediate and process his life experiences through a number of texts and artworks he creates during the performance. Through the living installation Boshoff puts his creative, thinking process on display by setting up a studio within the gallery space and performing the artist or druid at work.

My own mode of performance within this project is different to that of Beuys and Boshoff in that my presence is mediated by the prints and the process rather than being a live performance. My presence is silent and implied due to the fact that the technology of printmaking and its location within specialized studios forces a distance between the printmaker and the final product. This distance is as a result of a print being an impression or effect of the printmaking process and as such the printed product hides the process of producing the matrix. Unlike Boshoff working in his cubicle, my relationship to a studio space is alluded to through the artworks on display rather than setting up a functioning studio within the gallery. The absence of the printmaker and the removal of the labour intensive process when viewing a print is one of the driving forces behind this project in that I am trying to find visual forms to draw the printmaker into the gallery space and to show the process and

investment involved in producing a print. Objects such as the aprons, rollers, notebooks and chalkboards therefore become the surrogates or metonymic objects of my presence within and my thought process in making the work.



Fig 6. Joseph Beuys, *Barraque Dull Odde* (1961-67). Installation (detail).

Journeyman as Alchemist

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘alchemy’ as “the medieval forerunner of chemistry, concerned with the transmutation of matter, in particular with attempts to convert base metals into gold or find a universal elixir”, as well as “a seemingly magical process of transformation, creation, or combination” (2013. Sv ‘alchemy’). Within the practice of alchemy, and by extension within the figure of the alchemist, there is a tension between two modes of operation: the scientific and the magical. Alchemy, entrenched in material experimentation and transformation, began laying foundations for a scientific (empirical) inquisition as well as made use of a magical (chance, intuitive, pseudo-scientific) approach. The alchemist is therefore both controlled scientist and magician, whose ‘tricks’ seem to defy conventions.

Within the realm of printmaking, the journeyman also inhabits both the expressions of the alchemist. Many of the techniques within printmaking rely on basic scientific principles and reactions, such as the corrosive action of acid on metal being determined by the exchange of metal ions. In addition to the chemical reactions between substances, knowledge of the chemical compositions of the various materials itself becomes important when handling them in various combinations. Many of the techniques in printmaking can therefore be reduced down to empirical methods, which can be controlled. My own ethos within printmaking is that the greater the knowledge of the scientific principles and chemical compositions at work, the greater the range of possibilities that are opened up in terms of material experimentation and the development of new techniques. A large part of my project has been to demystify certain aspects of printmaking for myself by learning and understanding the chemistry behind the processes. This pursuit has also allowed me to experiment with the materials used within printmaking as well as with substitute materials, in order to develop different working methods. In the same instant, though, the science of printmaking can also become the magic of printmaking. To the uninitiated, chemistry can appear as something magical or mystical, despite the fact that the ‘magic’ can be empirically explained. For example, I am still struck by the magic of immersing a copper plate in an acid and watching the metal getting bitten away, despite understanding the chemistry involved. Apart from the sense of wonder experienced by the uninitiated, most of the magic of printmaking is contained in the handing over of control to the technology of printmaking. It is within these same moments of printmaking (such as etching a copper plate or running a plate through the press) that ideas such as intuition, trust, faith and hope become part of the way in which I interact with the process. I am therefore becoming the scientist whose drive is to know empirically and to control, while at the same

time becoming the magician who can be both bewildered and bewitched by the performed trick. The journeyman as alchemist is therefore the custodian of both a practical and theoretical body of scientific knowledge, while at the same time appearing to be the magician.

Journeyman as Priest

In this reflection of the journeyman I draw on three aspects of priesthood to speak to the sacred, ritual and devotional aspects of printmaking and of this project, namely: the priest as custodian, the priest as the performer of rituals and the process of vesting as an act of preparation.

One of the roles of the priest is as the custodian of a system of rituals and beliefs which the priest is charged to practice, protect and teach or preach. The archaic term for “a minister with pastoral responsibility” is the *curate*, a term with the Latin root *cura*, which means ‘to care’ (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2013. Sv ‘curate’). The priest as custodian is the one who cares for that which is under his responsibility. The journeyman as priest is therefore the custodian of the traditions, techniques and history of printmaking, while at the same time being the one with an attachment and devotion to the practice that extends beyond a technical and theoretical knowledge of the field. In this project the enacting or performing of the rituals in printmaking becomes an act of devotion showing my attachment and glorification of the process as something valuable and worthy of the labour required. Where the scientist seeks to demystify, strip down and streamline, the priest recognizes and celebrates the mystical, labour-intensive and rhythmic aspects of printmaking.

Apart from the religious connotations of the word *ritual*, the word also denotes “a series of actions or type of behaviour regularly and invariably followed by someone” (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2013. Sv ‘ritual’). The journeyman as a custodian within printmaking is thus the custodian of the series of printing actions, which are often repeated and, due to their systemic nature, need to be carried out in particular sequences. The act of making a print (both in creating the matrix and in producing the print object) therefore becomes a series of rituals, which must be learnt and performed in order to become a printmaker.

The final important aspect of the priest, particularly within the Roman Catholic Church, is that of a vested figure. The vestments of the priest are an important signifier of the office of priesthood as well as the rituals that are performed. The act of putting on the vestments before a mass, for instance, is the preparation for performing the role of the priest in the service. As a

printmaker, the apron holds the same significance for me as the vestments of a priest. The act of putting on the apron becomes the preparation ritual for performing the role of the printmaker. The aprons are my visual markers of the printmaker but also, in an expanded sense, the markers of the performer of rituals.

Journeyman as Flâneur

The term *flâneur*, from the French *flâner*, which means to saunter or lounge, refers to a man who wanders around observing society (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2013. Sv ‘flâneur’). It was used to describe the wealthy, educated men who strolled through Paris in the nineteenth century. Marx described the flâneur (in response to the poems of Charles Baudelaire) as a person intoxicated by the city and the crowds and who had the “incomparable privilege of being himself and someone else as he sees fit. Like a roving soul in search of a body, he enters another person whenever he wishes” (cited in Benjamin 1997:55). The flâneur constantly shifts the conception of self or the persona based on the surroundings, performing his or her identity through a number of figures. As a nomad of the city, the agency of the flâneur centers on the mobility of this figure as a generator of journeys in order to indulge in, collect and experience the city and the people as an observer. Walter Benjamin, in his work *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, also writes of the flâneur and the fascination with the city as something mysterious and phantasmagorical; and “regardless of [the flâneur’s] sober calculations, also participates in fashioning the phantasmagoria of Parisian life” (Benjamin 1997:41). Baudelaire speaks of the magical fascination with the city as the “‘the big cities state of religious intoxication’, the commodity is probably the unnamed subject of this state. [The state of intoxication is] ‘that holy prostitution of the soul which gives itself wholly, poetry and charity, to the unexpected that appears, to the unknown that passes’” (Ibid.:56).

Within the figure and the actions of the flâneur there is a sense of ambiguity between exploration and discovery. The agency of the flâneur lies in the organic way in which different and sometimes contradictory aspects of culture are assimilated, constituting the flâneur as a complex cultural product. In his work *Relational Aesthetics* Nicolas Bourriaud writes of two understandings of the *artist*. The first, based on the writings of Benjamin Buchloch, is defined as “a ‘scholar/philosopher/craftsman’, who hands society ‘the objective results of his labour’ [... and is] represented by Yves Klein, Lucio Fontana and Joseph Beuys” (Bourriaud 2002:108). Bourriaud extends Buchloch’s definition into the contemporary moment by stating that “[t]oday’s artist appears as an operator of signs, modeling production structures so as to provide significant doubles.

An entrepreneur/politician/director. The most common denominator shared by all artists is that they *show* something” (Ibid.). Bourriaud’s contemporary definition of the artist connects with the figure of the flâneur as a negotiator of signs and “production structures” (Ibid.), while at the same time retaining the scholarly, philosophical and craft-based aspects – particularly within my use of the journeyman as flâneur.

As a sauntering observer, the flâneur experiences his or her current environment with an investigative curiosity. It is this sense of curiosity which drives my material experimentation and research into new and different ways of handling familiar processes and materials. My approach to art-making, in light of the journeyman as flâneur, is based on journeys through a variety of media, techniques, references, experiences, academic fields, writings and various modes of cultural production, all coalesced into art objects.

In addition to the flâneur as the inquisitive gatherer, the journeyman as flâneur expresses the communal involvement of the printmaker. A large aspect of working in a communal studio is the need to negotiate working with or alongside other printmakers. Observing different working methods, learning other people’s techniques, solving problems together as well as discussing ideas, philosophies and artworks all form part of the way in which I think about printmaking and myself as printmaker. In this way the flâneur is a student of his or her environment, while at the same time bringing the accumulated knowledge back into the studio.

⁴ Within guild structured society printmaking would have been viewed as a trade skill alongside carpentry, glass blowing, masonry, textiles and many others. It is therefore important to make the distinction between the function of printmaking within a medieval guild setting (as a reproduction industry) and the function of printmaking as a post-Renaissance Fine Art discipline.

⁵ In *The Guilds*, Braddon notes that journeymen did not complete or produce their masterpiece due to a lack of means to establish their own workshop and due to these constraints “a journeyman might remain so for life” (1925:6).

⁶ Boshoff performed *Big Druid in His Cubicle* during the Basel Art Fair in 2009 as part of Art Unlimited. (Boshoff 2012: Online).



Fig 7. Irving Penn, *Pâtisseries* [Pastry Chefs], Paris (1950). Platinum/ palladium print on Arches paper

States of inbetweenness

Within the project of *The Printer's Grey* much of the focus is placed on the production of prints within the studio environment with specialized equipment and materials, such as presses, acid baths, exposure units and rollers. Although a virtue of the discipline, at times the notion of intuition comes to the fore, when one *knows* that something will work without being able to qualify this *knowing*. As such, the importance of the hand-knowledge of craft practitioners cannot be underestimated in relation to printmaking as a valuable form of *knowing*, which is different from empirical forms of knowledge. This distinction between different forms of *knowing* has been explored in terms of propositional and tacit knowledge.

Epstein and Prak, while reflecting on guild-based training, speak of the propositional and tacit epistemological systems in the following:

Propositional knowledge is factual as well as theoretical, logical and explicit, and can therefore be learned from printed sources. Tacit knowledge, on the other hand, is implicit, non-linear, and addresses 'how' rather than 'why' questions. Because it cannot be articulated – 'we can know more than we can tell', as one scholar put it – tacit knowledge needs to be transferred from person to person. This is confirmed by psychological research that demonstrates how this transfer of tacit knowledge happens most effectively in 'communities of practice', like craft guilds; modern skills training programmes in fact still reflect this. (2008:6-7)

From Epstein and Prak's writing it is clear that the intuitive *knowing* or hand-knowledge falls under the definition of tacit. The etymology of the term *tacit* further elucidates this. The term stems from Latin *tacitus* meaning 'silent', gesturing to that which is "understood or implied without being spoken" (*Oxford English Dictionary*. 2012. Sv 'tacit'). In *The Art of the Maker*, Peter Dormer, in describing the *plastic arts*⁷ uses the terms skill and craft as interchangeable terms for tacit knowledge - that which must be demonstrated and cannot be adequately captured in spoken or written words. Despite the 'silent' and experiential nature of tacit knowledge, Dormer posits craft knowledge as a disciplined knowledge, "as disciplined as applied science" (Dormer 1994:17).

Craft knowledge also makes use of a concrete, precise verbal and written language. This language does not adequately describe the actual carrying out of a process because in any description of a practical activity too much that is important gets left out. Nonetheless, every craft has a technical language. (Dormer 1994:17)

Dormer further notes that “[c]raft knowledge frequently uses precise language whose beauty derives from the craftsperson’s close knowledge of the material, the tools and the processes” (Ibid.:18). A relationship therefore exists between the technical language of a craft (propositional knowledge) and the silent workings of the craft (tacit knowledge), both of which are reflected in the production of the craftsperson. The beauty of the language of a craft, which in this project is printmaking, is as a result of the presence of the craftsperson and their investment in the materials. In this way Dormer starts to speak of the craftsperson in a magical way. The craftsperson, in holding both propositional and tacit forms of knowledge, becomes the alchemist – simultaneously the scientist using empirical methods as well as the magician using more intuitive methods. Both of these types of knowledge are present within the skilled practitioner and the well-wrought print, since the tacit and propositional cannot be neatly separated out. Rather, the craft practitioner, or in this case the printmaker, operates between tacit and propositional forms of knowledge.

While thinking and writing about craft skill, Dormer briefly mentions an inner dialogue that occurs within the practitioner while in the process of making. It is what Dormer terms dialogue that I would call the thinking space within printmaking – the in-between of tacit and propositional knowledge. Dormer describes this dialogue as the following:

In the most complex crafts there is, for the expert in it, a form of dialogue going on between the practitioner, his expertise, and the goal that the practitioner is trying to make or find. Dialogue is not quite the right word, partly because in order to make progress an expert must rely on his or her expertise without concern. (Dormer 1994:19)

Dormer acknowledges the insufficiency of the word ‘dialogue’, and he rightfully points out that the expert rarely thinks about the silent or tacit aspects of their knowledge, but rather implements it as if it is second nature. Just as the “inability to describe the core of a craft becomes more and more acute the closer the craft comes to being an ‘art’” (Dormer 1994:14) so the need to ‘think about’ the carrying out of a hand skill becomes more and more acute as the tacit understanding of a craft becomes more developed. However, when Dormer speaks of the reliance on “expertise without concern” (Ibid.:19) I do not believe he is implying a thoughtless process, but rather is hinting at a complex and organic thinking process which does not need to be rationalized constantly during the act of making. To assert the presence of hand-knowledge and the idea that making is thinking is to acknowledge that the “cognitive operations called thinking are not the privilege of mental processes above and beyond perception but the essential ingredients of perception itself” (Arnheim cited in Johnson 2010:149). This assertion, that seeing and making is a thinking process, relates to the importance of the technique, material and process of

printmaking in the creation of a printed artwork. To lose sight of technique is to disavow the medium's inextricable role in creating the image.

While the technical aspects of printmaking allow one to produce a print, the decisions made during the production become part of the content of the print and therefore cannot be divorced from the 'conceptual' aspects of the image. The systematic, technical constraints of printmaking therefore provide the space for play and experimentation rather than inhibiting the flexibility of creative expression – the printmaker's reliance on technique merely requires a different type of play and thinking through visual form. Dormer draws the same conclusion as he observes that “[d]esigners lose control over their creation once they relinquish it to production, whereas one of the strengths of a handicraft-based art form is the flexibility it allows for the artist to change, expand and explore his original intention (or design) until the point he or she considers that the art work is complete” (1994:30). This flexibility, however, proceeds from the structured, rules-based learning of a craft skill in that “learning may well involve drilling and rote-learning, but [...] once the rules are mastered, one has freedom to be creative with them” (Janik cited in Dormer 1994:23). Arnheim, in listing cognitive operations, supports Dormer's idea of the flexibility of the artist within craft skill as he distinguishes “active exploration, selection, grasping of essentials, simplification, abstraction, analysis and synthesis, completion, correction, comparison, problem solving, as well as combining, separating, putting in context” (Arnheim cited in Johnson 2010:149) as perceptual thinking processes. All of these processes at work within the print studio are therefore part of the dialogue between the knowledge of the craft, the craft itself and the work being produced, all of which are held together in the craftsman or printmaker.



Fig 8. Joseph Beuys, *Directional forces* emerging from discussions at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (1974). London

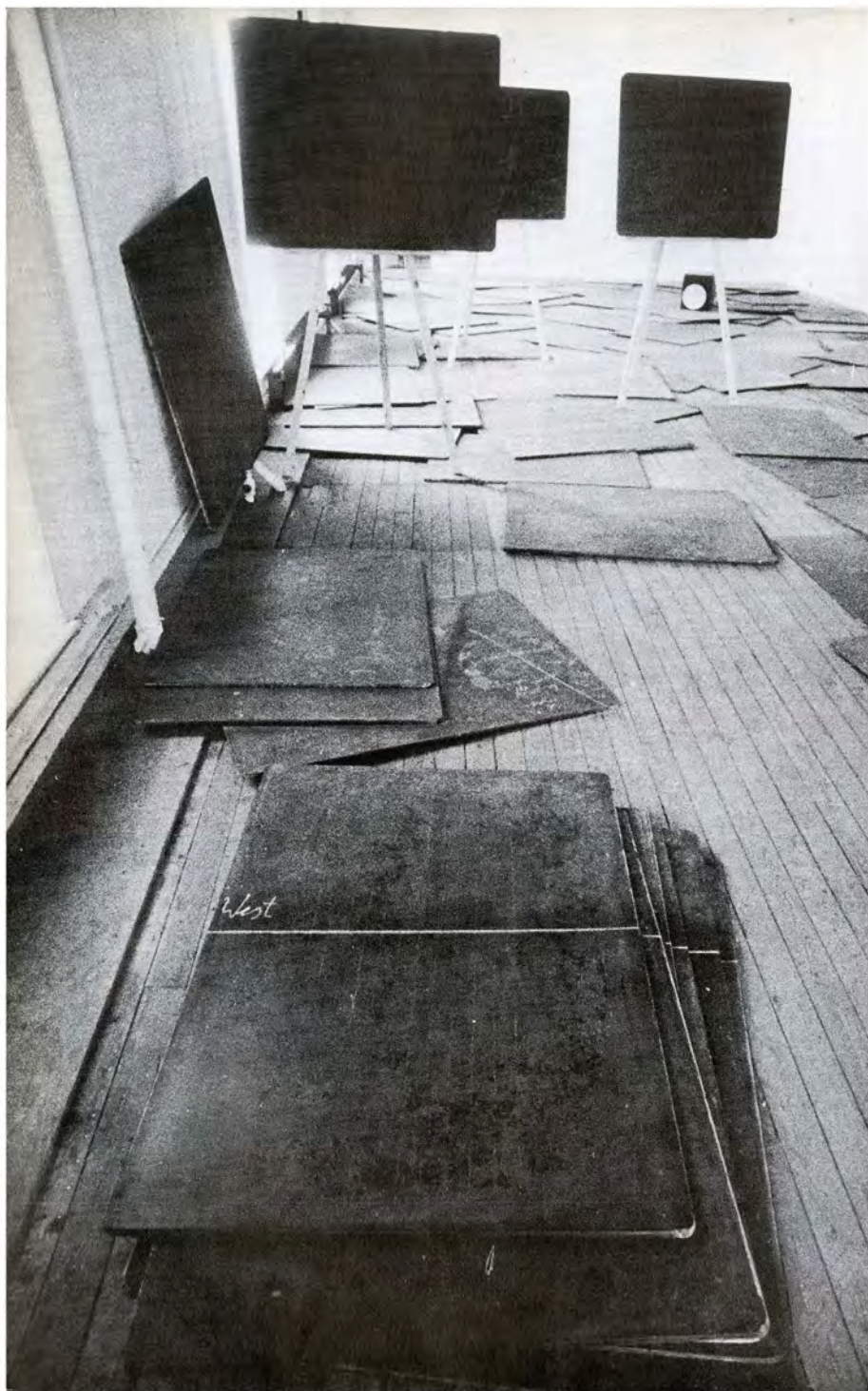


Fig 9. Joseph Beuys, *Directional forces* as installed in the René Block Gallery (1975). New York

Let us not fool ourselves. All of us, including those who think professionally, as it were, are often enough thought-poor; we are far too easily thought-less. Thoughtlessness is an uncanny visitor who comes and goes everywhere in today's world. For nowadays we take in everything in the quickest and cheapest way, only to forget it just as quickly, instantly. (Heidegger 1966:44-45)

In the quote above Martin Heidegger is simultaneously critiquing thoughtlessness and motioning towards mindfulness. As Mugerauer, on writing about Heidegger, put it: "At the least, he is asking us to reflect on what we do and on how we do it" (1988:2). This reflection, or the mindful application of activity, has become increasingly important to the way I think about printmaking, due to the repetitive and ritualized nature of the process, which could easily become mindless. I do not believe that the repetitive or ritualized aspects of printmaking are mindless, but rather that they allow for different modes of thinking and reflection. Just as Epstein and Prak noted a distinction between two types of knowledge, Heidegger draws a distinction between two types of thinking, namely calculative and meditative. Anderson, in the introduction to *Discourse on Thinking*, notes Heidegger's insistence that "the calculative thinking of modern science and its humanly significant applications are discerned in and through meditative thinking" (1966:13). From this we see that Heidegger creates an opposition between meditative and calculative thinking, while embedding calculative thinking within meditative thinking. Anderson continues to expand on this in the following:

By contrast to representative thinking [what Heidegger would refer to as calculative thinking], it [meditative thinking] is thinking which allows content to emerge within awareness, thinking which is open to content. Now thinking which constructs a world of objects understands these objects; but meditative thinking begins with an awareness of the field within which these objects are, an awareness of the horizon rather than of the objects of ordinary understanding. (Anderson 1966:24)

Calculative or representational thinking is therefore preoccupied with objects, both in creating and understanding them – that which is quantifiable, perhaps even propositional. Meditative thinking, however, is closer to relational thinking in that it broadens the field of thought beyond the object and sees the object in relation to 'field' and 'horizon'. In other words, calculative thinking is linear or based in silos, whereas meditative thinking is networked and relational. Heidegger qualifies this when he states that meditative thinking "demands of us not to cling one-sidedly to a single idea, nor to run down a one-track course of ideas. Meditative thinking demands of us that we engage ourselves with what at first sight does not go together at all" (Heidegger 1966:53). This is in a sense what liminality as a thinking and *becoming* process is about – reflecting on the relationships between things, especially things which seem to be contradictory or seem to repel each other.

Meditative thinking also holds another dimension for Heidegger, namely contemplation. When pitted against calculative thinking, Heidegger claims that only meditative thinking “contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is” (1966:46). While Heidegger’s goal is to conceive of “man’s authentic nature” (Anderson 1966:14) - the nature of Being – what I find of importance is the macro position meditative thinking assumes in order to allow for a contemplative or reflexive space. The delays in the printmaking process offer this space of meditation or contemplation – space to reflect on the actions already undertaken as well as the contemplation of or thinking through the next set of actions. The printmaker’s reliance on technology opens up these spaces of delay, which force a distance between the printmaker (craftsperson) and the work being produced. It is within this space that my notebooks play an important role for recording these thought processes as they progressively occur in the studio, between experimenting with techniques and materials and creating artworks. It is therefore both within the act of doing (labour) and in the temporary pause of labour that thinking occurs as a push and pull between focusing on a task at hand and remaining mindful of the process and desired outcome as a whole. This, for me, is a meditative, thoughtful interaction with hand-based processes.

⁷ Dormer uses the term *plastic arts* to speak about both the applied arts (skill based arts, perhaps what could be termed *craft*) and fine arts. He qualifies the term as meaning “painting, sculpture and studio craft whose content is substantially dependent on practical skill, and whose intention is discoverable through the process of making the object.” (1994:7)

Walkabout of *The Printer's Grey*

7. Prints are highly individualized statements within the confines of rigidly defined technical means; they embody a condition of modernism – the conflict between man and machine, the handmade and the replicated, the original and the copy. (Field 1994:171)

The curating of *The Printer's Grey* mirrors the tension Field notes in the quotation above: the tension between the print as an individualized statement and its position within a system (technical means), which is larger than the individual print. The exhibition assumes the curatorial form of stations or nodes from which connections and relationships can be drawn between sets of works, which together form *The Printer's Grey*. The separating of sets of works in stations draws on two ideological aspects of the white cube, namely the white cube as laboratory and the white cube as cathedral – a space of inquiry and a sacred space. Each station becomes an individual site of contemplation and inquiry, with the viewer journeying between stations, reminiscent of the journeying through depictions of the Stations of the Cross in a cathedral. My aim is to create contemplative sights, which inscribe the auric and sacred to the act of printing and to the workings of the printmaker (which are not necessarily drawn into the display and viewing of prints). *The Printer's Grey* is therefore a remediation and reaffirmation of the aura of the printed artwork by drawing attention to the labour, skill and complex thinking processes vested in the making of a print as an autonomous creative act. *The Printer's Grey* as an exhibition involves creating an aura⁸ around the act of making a print and the printmaker, and in doing so elevating these two aspects beyond a set of specialized techniques carried out by trained practitioners. However, in this cathedral and laboratory of printmaking, both as sites of homage to and inquiry of the discipline, it is the act of journeying between stations, as well as their interconnectedness, which underpins the thinking process of the project.

⁸ In this sense I am using the term *aura* in a broader sense than that of Walter Benjamin in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* in that I am not arguing the loss or return of the aura of the artwork, but I am rather creating a set of experiences around original artworks about the printed artwork.

Not Yet, Maybe Never

White apron with gold embroidery

85 x 134 cm

The opening statement of the exhibition, a white apron embroidered with a golden chop mark, begins the journey through *The Printer's Grey* by both marking the underlying drive towards perfection and hinting at the ceaselessness of this pursuit. As the counterpoint to the black uniform of the journeyman, the white apron stands as the marker of the position or rank of 'master'. The display of the pristine apron elevates its importance as a metonymic object while delaying or suspending its immediate use. Titled *Not Yet, Maybe Never*, the work references the striving towards mastership as a healthy, productive drive, yet revealing the bathos of this drive in that the desire for mastership will ultimately result in shortfall with a white apron easily becoming tarnished through use. Perfection, like grey, does not exist but, is an illusion created by those with great skill.



Working

Plaster cast leather roller, paper and wooden tipping table

73 x 58 x 120 cm

Working is a plaster cast facsimile of a leather roller continuously rolling over a sheet of white paper. The continual movement of the roller references the ritual and repetition of printmaking processes, particularly the process of editioning, and becomes the surrogate for the journeyman as the performer of rituals. The work implies the presence and labour of the printmaker without producing a print per se (the roller is uninked and has no image engraved into its surface). The impressions created on the paper are therefore records of the action of the roller (the labour). It is the redundancy of the labour of this work, which draws attention to the time and labour investments of the other artworks. It is by the repetitive labour and performing of the printmaking processes that one becomes the printmaker. The work, however, unravels itself as the impact of the roller on the edges of the printing table slowly wears away the surface of the roller, which after enough time will cause the work to stall.





Offering I

Etching Installation (Copper basin, burette, retort stand and Dutch Mordant)
58 x 58 x 135 cm

Offering II

Monotype, pencil and red oxide on Fabriano
89 x 60.5 cm

The next site or station is the *Offering*, an etching installation accompanied by a drawing. The installation consists of a polished copper basin with a burette dropping Dutch mordant into the basin. Dutch mordant is a blue, acidic solution used to etch copper. As the basin fills with mordant the copper will be corroded until the mordant eventually breaks through the copper, essentially 'ending' the artwork. This work offers the physical or material process of a mordant biting copper as a site or moment of contemplation, mimicking an aspect of the contemplative space of the printmaking studio. The work also references the tension between control and the lack of control within printmaking processes - the polished copper is released from the printmaker's control to the mordant to allow for a chemical process to take over. The work also speaks to the time invested in the printmaking process and the delay the process forces the printmaker to work within. The chemical aspects of the process, therefore, become the clock of the printmaker.

The basin is accompanied by a drawing and monotype of the journeyman in a supplicatory posture, offering the basin up to the viewer. The drawing is a combination of monotype printing, red oxide⁹ and contour drawing, which, although forming a completed image, could be read as a sketch or plan for a print.



⁹ Red oxide pigment is used in lithography to transfer preparatory drawings onto a stone or plate without creating a grease deposit. As a substance, red oxide is inert and disappears once the drawing is processed.



Uniform

Black aprons with grey embroidery

Edition of 10

85 x 134 cm each

In this work I have applied the tradition of editioning within printmaking to an unconventional 'object'. The edition of 10 aprons fulfill the requirements of an edition, since they were cut from the same piece of fabric, and the size, handling and assembly of each component is the same. The edition, however, becomes undone as each of the aprons was used during the production of the other works for this exhibition – each apron has its own unique trace of the actions performed in the studio. The aprons therefore fall between the strict rigour of the editioning tradition and the unique, once-off artwork, each of which becomes the artefacts or remnants of the ritual, performed space of the printmaking studio.

As a secondary layer to the work, the aprons function as the uniform of the printmaker, or even more specifically, my uniform as printmaker in that the aprons are tailored to suit my height and body type. The act of wearing my own aprons becomes the visual mark of myself performing or taking on the role of the printmaker, as well as vesting myself as the priest. In the exhibition space, the aprons stand metonymically for the presence of the printmaker as well as for the physical hand labour of creating prints. The accumulation of printerly traces therefore becomes the record of my time spent in studio as journeyman – as one striving for mastership, yet still within the space of learning and play. There is a tension between the multiplicity of the aprons signaling the division of labour within the history and practice of printmaking, and the location of the labour of the project in the journeyman. The division of labour is therefore not between different people, but between the different personas of the journeyman as well as different working processes. In relation to the white apron (the counterfoil), the 10 black aprons signal the various paths and endeavours towards mastership, with the traces on the aprons bearing testimony to the journey.



Procedure I-III

Monotype, pencil and red oxide on Fabriano

96 x 63.5 cm each

As the mirror of the 10 black aprons, *Procedure* is a set of 3 drawings which depict my ritual of putting on an apron. As the first action of working in a print studio, putting on an apron is therefore the act of myself becoming the printmaker and performing myself into the role of journeyman. Drawn in a similar process to the *Offering II* drawing, these works are a combination of monotype printmaking, red oxide and pencil drawing. The drawing process behind these works involves a contemplative or meditative mode of thinking since there was a constant push and pull between drawing and printing into the paper in the process of producing the drawings. The drawings were therefore a constant response to what the image was becoming as I switched between pencil, red oxide and monotype. The materials used in these drawings are significant in terms of their temporality, especially when compared to other forms of printing in which a stable matrix or printing surface is created in order to produce many impressions. Red oxide and pencil, in a process such as lithography, would be used for preparatory drawing and planning, which would be discarded or lost in the process. The absence of a stable printing technique is replaced by the presence of the printmaker or journeyman preparing for the rituals of the print process.





Exposition of Etching, Lithography and Photolithography

Digital print on Inova

Edition of 5

72 x 44 cm each

The *Exposition of Etching, Lithography and Photolithography* is a set of 3 photographs taken in the etching and lithography studios at Michaelis and Stellenbosch University. Each photograph represents 5 aspects of each printmaking process, capturing my particular gestures and actions as carried out in the studio. In this instance, myself as journeyman becomes the presence and embodiment of the process without the transference of tacit or propositional knowledge. The series is not intended to be didactic, but it rather draws the ritualized moments of printmaking and the studio environment into the realm of the sacred as I perform the roles of printmaker and journeyman. The photographs serve as a record of my own posture, gesture and involvement within three particular print studios, which distinguishes me from a painter or sculptor creating work in different spaces. In this way, each of the photographs are a mirror to the curation of the exhibition in that they visualize different stations of contemplation which I occupy as a printmaker. These photographs also reference the historical tradition of printmaking and studio production in that they quote historical etchings and engravings depicting print studios.

The photographs are also a secondary mirror to the black aprons and provide another trace or evidence of the presence of the journeyman. The photographs and black aprons are also linked in that they are the only set of works that exist as an edition, with both these sets gesturing towards repetitive action. The photographs, however, are the only true edition, as the aprons subvert the conventional tradition of editioning because they have all built up traces of the printing processes in different ways.



Fig 10. Illustration from Stradanus' *New Discoveries*, Printmaking shop (1580). Etching on copper

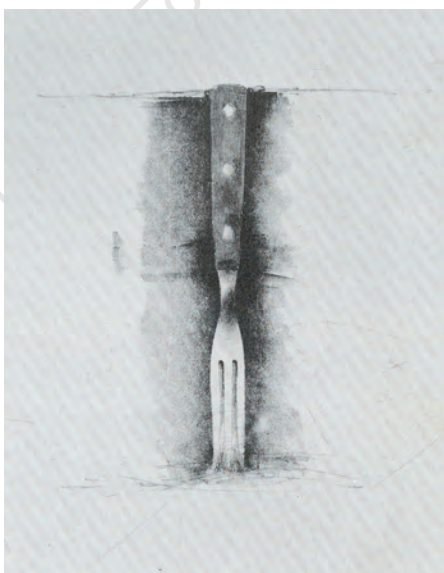
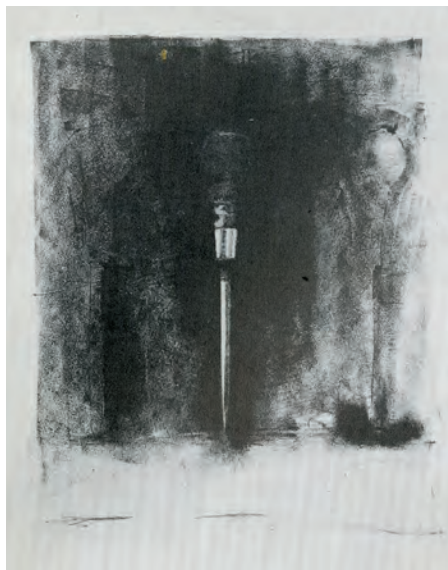


Fig 11. Jim Dine, *Winter Tools* (1973). Lithographs on German Etching Deluxe Paper

Viewing room

The final station at the exhibition is a print viewing room with a set of 3 paper drawers housing 3 sets of prints. This space requires the viewer to invest time and care in the act of viewing and draws on the custodial tradition of the print cabinet.

Portrait of the Journeyman I-III

Monotype on Fabriano

96 x 64.5 cm each

The final set of prints in the drawers are 3 monotypes depicting the tools and materials used in printmaking. These include lithographic drawing media, gum, acids, blades, distilled water, asphaltum, rosin, bone folders, needles and scrapers. The tools and materials stand metonymically for the journeyman as one means of defining both the craft of printmaking and the persona of printmaker. These prints seek to draw attention to the tools and materials used in the production of prints, but at the same time recognize the disappearance of these objects behind the 'final' printed product. The tension between visualization and disappearance is created through the monotype process, as all these prints were built up with very thin transparent layers of ink, which emerge and disappear depending on the lighting on the print and the viewers vantage point in relation to the print. The means by which the tools and materials were drawn also hint at the objects' shape and form rather than fully revealing them with a photographic realism. The objects are therefore carefully and meticulously rendered to require very close scrutiny to identify them. Jim Dine, in *Ten Winters Tools*, a set of 10 lithographs, achieves similar tension between the objects he depicts and the actions or atmosphere they imply. In this series Dine depicts a series of hand tools such as scissors, clamps, wrenches and cutlery, which, although depicted as the actual objects, allude to the use of the objects, which in turn alludes to the presence of the human hand. Dine's mark making and the way in which he built up these images in lithography also speak of an emotive response to these objects, which are utilitarian but can also be used for destructive actions.

Mordant and Metal I-VI and Notations I-VI

Oxidised Copper Prints and Moleskine Chine-Collé on Arches

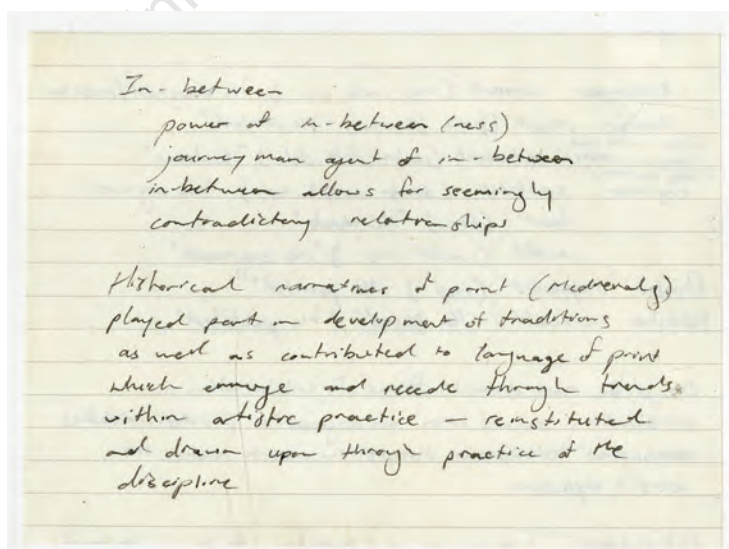
Solander box of 10 prints

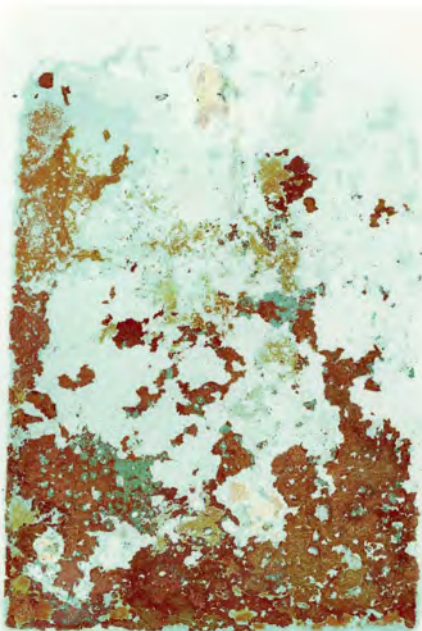
42 x 40 cm

Like the chalkboard series, this set of prints play with the process and language of etching on two levels – content and technique. On a technical level (the production of the prints) this series speaks of the surface materiality of copper, since the prints are made without ink and are residues of the physical surface of oxidized copper. The colour of the prints are a result of two chemical reactions that copper undergoes during oxidation, namely the formation of copper oxide (orange to brown ‘skin’ of the prints) and verdigris (a copper carbonate with green colouration). As with the chalkboard lithographs, this technique of printing the surface of copper was discovered through a series of material experiments to determine the correct combination of techniques to lift the copper oxide and verdigris from the metal surface. This required both a tacit understanding of how copper and paper behave under various printing conditions, as well as the propositional understanding of the material qualities of paper, copper, oxidation and printing presses. The final results were achieved with acidic paper baths, a book press and paper with a very smooth surface. This set of prints defy the tradition of editioning in that one cannot control the way in which a plate oxidizes or the amount of oxidation the paper will receive. Time also became an important factor in the production of these prints, and was based on a tacit timing of paper drying time and the dissolving or releasing time of the oxide with each print taking between 12 and 18 hours to produce. These prints will also undo themselves over time, as both the technique used to produce them and oxidized copper as a substance are corrosive and will eventually destroy the paper. A tension therefore exists between the momentary capturing of a substance and surface in printed form, and the inability to ensure the permanence of the print.

The content of the prints, or rather the image produced by the oxidized plates, also embodies the material qualities of a copper plate as well as the action acid carries out on a copper plate during etching. Various grounds or resists, particularly aquatint, were applied to the plates and allowed to etch for a time. I began to play with counter-conventional etching times, allowing the acid to bite the plates longer than the resist could hold. After each etch I would review the results of the etch and apply the next resist in response to the marks, shapes and impressions etched into the surface. A dialogue of sorts began to form between myself and the etching process; between my control of the applied resists and the surrendering of control as the plate was submerged in the acid. The metal plate facilitated this dialogue and became the thinking space between drawing on the plate and processing the plate.

Through both of these processes – creating the plates and developing the technique to print them – I used my notebooks as a means of recording my experiments and actions carried out on the plate. The notebooks therefore become the record of my thinking through these processes, with notes taken as I worked, as well as my meditations and improvements on previous studio sessions. Six samples or instances of my notebooks accompany the set of copper oxide prints, all of which are held together in a solander box.





Ferric chloride mordant

	Ferric water	
38° Baume	2:1	1 l. Ferric : 1/2 l. water
24° Baume	5:6	1 l. Ferric : 1.2 l. water

Full strength Ferric : 48° Baume

When mixing a new bath create a climate

- mix old and new mordant (acid has history - precipitation)
- activates chemistry preventing initial uneven biting

Edinburgh etch

Ferric chloride (FeCl_3) + Citric acid

5 part solution = 4 parts undiluted FeCl_3 + 1 part citric
[2.5 ml water + 12.5 ml citric crystals]
[2 l. FeCl_3 + 500 ml citric] Enough for a small etching bath

Citric acid solution

8 parts hot water + 1 part citric acid

[2.5 ml water + 12.5 ml citric crystals]

Add citric to water = stir as gradually add citric crystals

Add citric acid solution to Ferric chloride

Stir gradually mixing solution until uniform liquid

Works best at 18-20°C

Prevents loss of acid, citric acid stabilizes FeCl_3 molecule, removing sedimentation

Masterstep: Varsity of perfection
auto-continuous
cult of genius (precursor?)

1/656
+21 -3-0
-2

Mezzo 1 (Start)

-0.05

Coarse agent 10.30 7mm 56°

Fine agent 60 5mm 36° +45

+23

+4

Mezzo 2

Fine agent 30 70

10 min @ 36°

Wash Press 8

Fine agent 30 70

Mezzo 1 Final biting in first etch

→ color shock after agent wetting

Deep etched plates

9:55

Full strength (48°)

7:30

11:30

09:30

1 part open
6 part opaque
0.8 part heavy

Complete p.

137-147-218

131-0



Turning substances - copper wire (red → brown)
 verdigris (green)
 is copper carbonate.

Bath: 1 part vinegar (white spirit)
 3 part water
 Saturate with salt (NaCl)

(1) Zerkall 300gum No neutralisation
 13:46 2- back press No artefact release
 13:51 out of press

(2) Zerkall No neutralisation
 10:30 2- back press Sprinkle release (heavy sand)
 12:25 out of press leave for 10 min (no result)
 Paper completely fused! Bath in vinegar bath.

(3) Zerkall No artefact release
 11:37 2- back press No neutralisation
 12:50 out of press Paper damage on release!

(4) Arches HP 300gum No sprout backing
 24 point 13:30 2- back press - quick blotting only
 press 10:51 Time out No water bath
 Not strong enough impression

(5) Arches Agnew HP Blotted paper
 12:37 2- back press No release necessary
 17:01 out of back press leave longer in back
 Chemist under boots press

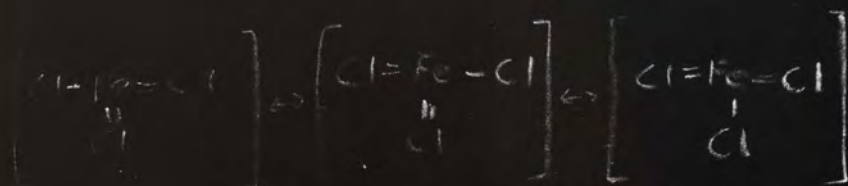
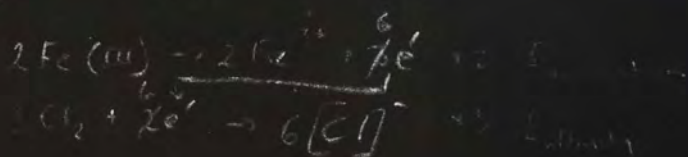
(6) Arches 300gum - Acetate backing
 12:00 2- back press Paper doesn't dry
 2:42 out of back press Back bath for rehydration
 quick press, no
 damage to image.

(7) Arches HP 300gum Acetate
 11:30 2- press Light reimpant blotting
 12:50 out of press Re-test release
 No neutralisation

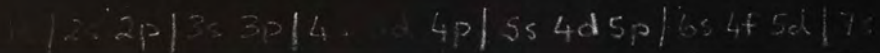
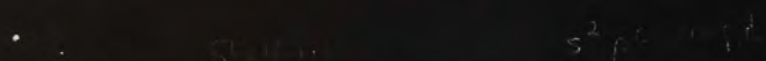
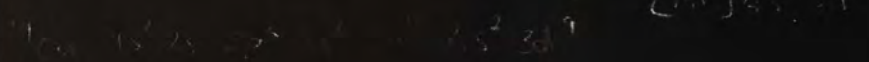
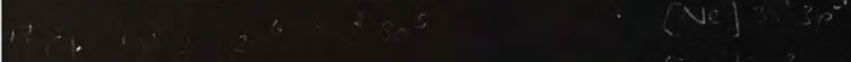
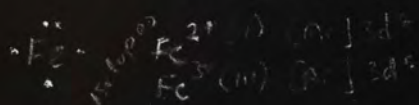
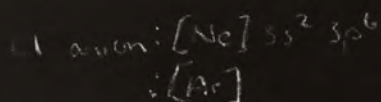
(8) HP Saunders 300gum Acetate backing
 13:30 2- back press Backing boards
 10:25 out of back press No reimpant
 Paper doesn't dry no blot!
 Colour prints into paper No add
 water bath after release (no negative
 effect on p.)
 Add light blotting
 before 2 back press

Vinegar (Fr vinagre) saw wine
 (chem) Acetic acid $\begin{array}{c} \text{H} \\ | \\ \text{H} - \text{C} - \text{C} - \text{OH} \\ | \quad || \\ \text{H} \quad \text{O} \end{array}$
 From ethanol
 with oxidising
 agent $\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{H} \quad \text{H} \\ | \quad | \\ \text{H} - \text{C} - \text{C} - \text{OH} \\ | \quad | \\ \text{H} \quad \text{H} \end{array} \right] \text{ (ethanol)}$
 Oxygen cleavage

oxidation state
of the metal



Fe lowest oxidation



The Permanence of Chalk I-III
Chalk Lithograph on Arches
63 x 56 cm each

The chalkboards within this project begin to reflect the interplay between tacit and propositional knowledge, both in their content and in their technical execution. In terms of subject, the chalkboards show aspects of the chemical process which occurs during the act of etching a copper plate in three different mordants. The work emerged from my desire to understand the etching process on a chemical level, which involved a serious study of aspects of inorganic chemistry. In a sense I was trying to demystify the process of etching for myself, while at the same time extending my propositional knowledge as it pertains to copper plate etching. The prints stand in for the actual chalkboards used during the process of learning inorganic chemistry (the prints being exactly half the scale of the in-studio chalkboards). On a technical level the chalkboard lithographs in this series were created using a new lithographic technique¹⁰. In order to mimic the quality of chalk on a black surface I needed to find a means of sensitizing a lithographic matrix to grease without disrupting the chalk drawing. This presents a large challenge in that chalk as a substance absorbs grease. The solution to the print was arrived at by a play between a tacit and a propositional understanding of the process of lithography. Only through a tacit understanding of how a lithographic stone or plate behaves, and knowledge of the materials involved (both in terms of material composition and solvency), could a solution be found through a series of mindful experimentations. These 3 prints therefore become a record of my own learning and notation while at the same time offering a partial insight into the science of etching, provided the viewer can decode scientific notations.

¹⁰ I have yet to read of a chalk-based lithographic drawing being processed with a spray application of grease in any published printmaking manual, but stand under correction if such a technique (or a derivative technique) is being practiced elsewhere.



Fig 12. Irving Penn, *Rémouleur* [Knife Grinder], Paris (1950). Gelatin silver print mounted on board

Journey without a destination

In chasing the moving mirror through the materials and rituals of printmaking, catching glimpses of who the figure of the printmaker could be, the journey to understand my own investment in printmaking has lead back to the print studio. Having played the scientist and the magician; the priest and the wanderer; I have become none of them but at the same time remain all of them, still striving to earn the perfect white apron.

In graining the litho stone I have used for the last 2 years as my notepad, I am reminded of why I love printmaking: the rhythmic sound of the levigator as it glides over the carborundum; the glistening of a wet litho stone; the hum of the offset press as another printmaker pulls an edition; the smell of hot water hitting a limestone; all while my mind is wandering through the possibilities of my next print. Perhaps the beginning and end of this project are exactly the same – standing at a graining station in front of a freshly grained stone, wondering what it means to be a printmaker.

Aquatint

The most popular method used to create tone in intaglio prints. Granular acid-resistant material such as rosin is applied to a plate either by hand, resulting in irregular texture, or by an aquatint box, which creates an even, smooth tone. Spitbite, soap ground and sugar-lift are all ways of using aquatint.

Chine-Collé

A process used in conjunction with intaglio or lithography which allows for printing on to fine paper, whilst simultaneously adhering it to a heavier sheet.

Edition

A number of identical prints created from the same matrix. The limited edition is where the number of prints is declared and each print individually numbered, i.e. 1/50, 2/50. The understanding is that no further prints will be made.

Etching

A plate of copper, zinc or steel is coated with an acid-resistant ground. The artist draws into the ground to expose the metal. The whole plate is immersed in acid which bites through the drawing and creates an incised line. Ink is applied, and the plate cleaned leaving ink in the etched lines. The impression is made by applying a dampened sheet of paper to the plate and putting it through an etching press, which forces the ink out of the lines on to the paper. Many other etching techniques have been developed including photo-etching, also called photogravure. The plate is coated with photo-resist and exposed to light. As certain parts harden, others become soft and will be 'bitten' by the acid as usual in the etching and intaglio process.

Ground

Common grounds include wax, asphaltum, shellac, rosin and soap. They all share acid-resistant properties and are used when preparing metal plates for etching.

Lithography

Lithography (often shortened to litho) is a process whereby the artist draws on to a prepared stone or plate using greasy drawing materials such as crayons or lithographic tusche. The plate or stone is then chemically treated using gum and acid to allow the drawn areas to attract ink. Lithography can either be 'direct', the paper laid on the stone or plate and printed directly, or 'offset', the images passed on to a rubber blanket and from there on to the paper.

Matrix

Matrix is the term used for the surface or screen from which the print is pulled. In digital printing, it can also be used to describe the original file from which the image is printed.

Monotype

A single, unique print produced from a painted plate with no fixed matrix. Although only one complete impression can be made, traces of left-over ink can result in a second, lighter 'ghost' print.

Proof

The term to describe any print made towards the final resolved image. The artist can test the progress of an image by making a number of proofs before the print is finished. This differs from an Artist's Proof (AP) or Printer's Proof (PP) which is a sample of a finished print.

* Derived from *Printmaking: A Contemporary Perspective* by Paul Coldwell (Coldwell 2010:186-187).

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